



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
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Greetings! We hope your district's preparations are going well for the start of the 2011-12 school year.

We want to let you know about recent developments at the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) for the design and revision of K-12 education data systems. These developments will have a significant, and hopefully beneficial, impact on the way that OPI and schools share and provide access to K-12 education data.

As OPI moves forward with these efforts, we are committed to an open process involving school districts and policymakers. We understand it is critical to provide adequate notice to school districts of upcoming data collections. For the new reporting requirements established by the state legislature in Senate Bill 329 (SB 329), the OPI will release data definitions, file formats, policies and timelines early in the 2011-12 school year. Most of the actual collection of the SB329 new data elements will begin in 2012-13. This timeframe will give school districts an opportunity to plan for the implementation, and it should improve the quality of the data collected.

We know that new system requirements will place increased demands on school district staff time and resources. In order to mitigate these costs, wherever possible, OPI will work with vendors who provide accounting, human resource management, and school management software to Montana school districts. OPI will work with these vendors to design file extracts from their software systems. We also plan to provide training in both electronic formats and in-person training sessions in order to make the most efficient use of school staff time and availability.

As with many new information systems and processes, the new data collected from schools will not be perfect the first year. For those OPI data collection tools that are used for critical state level activities (distribution of funding, accreditation of schools), OPI may find it necessary to run parallel systems (old and new) for at least one full cycle.

SENATE BILL 329

Senate Bill 329, adopted by the 2011 Legislature, contains many new requirements for data collection and reporting by OPI and school districts. The major additions include the creation and posting of a district education profile for each school district and the posting of salary and benefit information for all school employees (both licensed and classified staff), average daily attendance of enrolled students, and the numbers of students participating in extracurricular activities.

District Education Profiles

SB 329 requires OPI to post, on its website, an educational data profile for each district, which contains:

- school district contact information and links to district websites, when available;
- state criterion-referenced testing results;
- program and course offerings;
- student enrollment and demographics by grade level; and
- graduation rates.

Meeting this requirement will require no new data collection from school districts.

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Annual Reports to OPI

SB 329 also requires each school district to annually report to OPI and post on its website the following district information for the previous school year:

- the number and type of employee positions, including administrators;
- the total amount of compensation paid to each school district employee by the district, including the employee's base wage or salary, overtime pay, and other income from school-sanctioned extracurricular activities, including coaching and similar activities; and
- the certification held by and required of each employee;
- the student-teacher ratio by grade;
- the amount spent by the district for operation and maintenance, stated in total cost and cost per square foot;
- the amount of principal and interest paid on bonds;
- the total district expenditures per student;
- the total budget for all funds;
- the total number of students enrolled and the average daily attendance;
- the total amount spent by the district on extracurricular activities and the total number of students that participated in extracurricular activities; and
- the number of students that entered the 9th grade in the school district but did not graduate from a high school in that district and for which the school district did not receive a transfer request.

OPI will create these postings for school districts with data we collect from them. School districts already report many of these data elements to OPI. However, there are some new collections that will be required under SB 329. These new requirements are described below.

Average Daily Attendance

OPI currently computes average daily attendance based on two official count dates, the first Monday in October and February 1. It became clear during the legislative session that many legislators expect OPI to collect attendance data that reflects student attendance over the course of the entire school year. SB 329 requires school districts to report to OPI the total number of students enrolled in the district and their average daily attendance. For 2011-12, OPI plans to collect from each school district the days of attendance and days of enrollment for each student. The determination of present and absent will be based on each individual school district's policy. This collection will be a year-end collection through AIM State Edition. The 2011-12 school year will provide districts and OPI with an opportunity to evaluate the data collection process and the quality of the data. Once the 2011-12 "trial year" is completed, OPI will propose rules which define average daily attendance for the long-term.

Salaries and Benefits

Another component of SB 329 requires schools to report the total amount of compensation paid to each school district employee, including the employee's base wage or salary, overtime pay, and other income from school-sanctioned extracurricular activities, including coaching and similar activities. To meet this requirement, OPI will collect salary and benefit data for each school district employee through MAEFAIRS based on the School Accounting Manual, Chart of Accounts. OPI provided a preliminary list of fund, program, function and object codes to school districts at the Montana Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) conference in June 2011. We are now refining our plans for this data collection based on feedback we received from school business officials.

The file format for this collection will be released in early October 2011. We are seeking volunteers to participate in a pilot project for 2011-12 with full implementation of the collection in 2012-13. We are already working with vendors of school district accounting and human resource systems, including CSA and Black Mountain, to develop file exports in an effort to ease the burden on school districts for this collection.

Along with the collection of salary and benefit data for each school employee, the OPI is developing a system to assign a statewide identifier for each school district employee. The OPI will use a tool, which is within its new educator licensure system, to assign these identifiers to school staff. The new licensure system has an anticipated completion date of March 2012. To request these identifiers, school districts will submit requests (electronically) for staff identifiers to the OPI along with a basic set of elements associated with each employee. This process will be similar to the process used by school districts to request statewide student identifiers.

Extracurricular Activities

SB 329 requires each school district to report the total amount spent on extracurricular activities and the total number of students that participated in extracurricular activities. OPI has not yet developed plans or objectives for meeting this requirement. We will be pulling together an advisory group to develop options for gathering this information from districts.

ON-GOING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENTS

State Longitudinal Data System (GEMS)

In March 2009, the OPI was awarded a 4-year, \$5.7 million grant by the U.S. Department of Education to improve the state's management of K-12 education data and to build a statewide longitudinal data system that makes data accessible to policymakers, educators and the public. During the 2010-11 school year, OPI worked with ESP Solutions to map out the data we collect, where it is stored, and how it is managed within the agency's information systems. Upon completion of the data mapping project, the OPI contracted with a vendor team which includes Vexcel, Microsoft, and Aspect, Inc. to develop a K-12 education data warehouse and to design the tools to access and display the data. We have named the state longitudinal data system project GEMS, Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students.

With the planning and design phases nearing completion, the OPI will soon begin loading data into its new K-12 data warehouse. The warehouse will allow OPI staff, school district personnel, and the public to access a wide variety of data related to K-12 education and to analyze trends across time. OPI plans to load student-related data into the data warehouse first, including enrollment, demographic, program participation, and assessment data. In the next phase, OPI will load data related to educators, including licensure information, teaching assignments and qualifications. This process of loading data into the warehouse is expected to be completed within 18 months.

Educator Licensure

The OPI has contracted with Hupp Information Technologies to rewrite its educator licensure system and expects to bring the new system into production in March 2012. This new system will replace an outdated legacy system that has been modified through the years to support the evolving needs of OPI, the Board of Public Education, educator preparation programs, and educators.

Key features of the new educator licensure system include:

- Improved capacity to process applications for educator licensure and to monitor educators' credentials
- Greater electronic access by school district personnel to the educator licensure system, including a feature for school administrators to inform licensure staff when schools are trying to hire someone with a pending licensure application
- Better integration of educator licensure data with the other OPI data
- More responsive maintenance and support to allow Montana to respond to new licensure requirements
- Ability for Montana educators and licensure applicants to check the status of their applications and credentials online

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- Access for licensure officials at Montana's educator preparation programs to recommend approved program completers for their initial license, add endorsements, and report internships
- Automation of workflow and many tasks that are currently completed manually
- Significant reduction in staff time spent entering data that currently arrives at OPI in paper format

National Student Clearinghouse

With state funding for the 2013 biennium, OPI will continue its contract with the National Student Clearinghouse to track college continuation rates and persistence rates for Montana high school graduates. The state's contract provides every Montana high school access to the *StudentTracker* tool, which the school can use to obtain information about the postsecondary enrollments of its high school graduates.

As you can see, these are significant projects for both school district and OPI staff. We are developing plans to engage school personnel (including school leadership, technology directors, and those responsible for entering data into the OPI data collection tools) in our design and implementation phases. We know the importance of involving our stakeholders at every stage of the process. We need your input, suggestions, feed-back and support in order for these efforts to succeed.

OPI will continue to share information with school districts about these projects through the OPI website, official e-mail to districts, and the monthly Summary of OPI Activities. As you have questions about these projects, please feel free to contact any of the following OPI staff.

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